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Ghosh after arrest; but "we believed that this will teach the people to dare and die"¹¹⁵ an echo, probably unconscious, of the anarchist theory of "propaganda by deed".

Yet the shift to terroristic methods had its critics within the movement. Jadugopal Mukherji claims that he was always opposed to Barindrakumar's adventurist ways; revolution, he had urged, must have four wings—students, peasants, workers and soldiers—and required years of patient preparation.¹¹⁶ It may be unwise to lay too much emphasis on reminiscences written as late as 1956, but Jadugopal's statement that Sasi-bhusan Raychaudhuri of Sodepur, one of the earliest members of the Calcutta Anushilan, was a particularly outspoken advocate of mass work in contrast to individual terror,¹¹⁷ is confirmed by other sources. Raychaudhuri started night-schools among villagers in Sodepur, and later became the chief organiser of the Workingmen's Institute run by the Anushilan in Calcutta.¹¹⁸ Bhupendranath Dutta has left an interesting account of the views of Abinashchandra Chakrabarti, the munsiff from Pabna who was a major financial support of Aurobindo's group. It seems that Abinashchandra was always somewhat sceptical about the value of 'akharas' of educated young men; he wanted the movement to be oriented towards the peasantry, and liked to cite the example of the Pabna raiyats' movement of the 1870s.¹¹⁹ In 1909, a police report stated that sharp differences had arisen in East Bengal between the Suhrid Samiti on the one hand and the Dacca Anushilan and Brati leaders on the other. The latter felt "that any act which will, in their opinion, terrorise or handicap the working of the British government is so much gained", and wanted to press ahead with individual assassination and political dacoity. The Suhrid, however, "would for the mo-

¹¹⁵ *Bengalee*, 6 May 1908.

¹¹⁶ Jadugopal Mukherji, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27, 277-85.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 196, 206.

¹¹⁸ Jibantara Halder, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹¹⁹ Bhupendranath adds that in 1936, shortly before his death, Abinashchandra was planning to contact Bankim Mukherji, the communist leader. Bhupendranath Dutta, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-35.

ment drop assassination and terrorism, educate the rural population and disseminate their views far more widely than has been done as yet"—weapons in the meantime should be quietly collected and stored against the day of a really nationwide uprising.¹²⁰

As mass contact in practice remained beyond the reach of all revolutionaries, it was this narrower debate over tactics—immediate action vs quiet and systematic preparatory work—which in course of time became a kind of dividing-line within the secret societies. Broadly speaking, the Yugantar groups, led by Jatindranath Mukherji and later by Jadugopal, tried to conserve their resources and establish international contacts, leading up to the famous Indo-German conspiracy of the war years; the Dacca Anushilan, on the other hand, preferred to stick to the pattern of dacoity and individual terror. Activities of both kinds, of course, remained well within the orbit of elite action; the dream of mass revolution had given place to schemes for military coup d'état backed by foreign powers.¹²¹

What all revolutionaries shared in common, of course, was a burning passion for national independence as a goal which could and must be attained in the near future. But as regards the exact contours of free India, there was scope for considerable vagueness. Both Bhupendranath and Hemchandra state that questions on the subject were discouraged by the secret society leaders.¹²² Debabrata Basu did tell the former, however, that a kind of Bundestaat might be set up, with some princely and some republican units.¹²³ A similar

¹²⁰ Home Political Progs Deposit, August 1909, n. 26—Report on 'National Volunteers' in Eastern Bengal and Assam up to the end of April 1909, p. 7.

¹²¹ Thus despite alleged plans for revolution based on peasants and workers, in practice, Jadugopal concentrated on getting arms from abroad—he sent his brothers Khirodgopal to Burma and Dhanagopal to Japan and America in 1908 for the purpose. Jadugopal Mukherji, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹²² Bhupendranath Dutta, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29; Hemchandra Kanungo, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

¹²³ Bhupendranath Dutta, *loc. cit.*

plan was sketched out in greater detail in an Abhinava Bharat pamphlet entitled *Choose, Oh Indian Princes*. This emphasised the need for representative assemblies in all units, but otherwise promised the princes a status "just like the position of German princes"—provided of course they cooperated with or at least did not hinder the process of liberation. The territories of "traitor princes" would be taken away, but only to be distributed among the patriotic rulers, and the pamphlet contains the rather interesting appeal: "Advance then, O Princes of India, boldly and bravely—there is nothing but your chains to lose!"¹²⁴ The political ideal was thus by no means consistently democratic; what was more serious, the early leaders made no attempt to spell out what independence would bring to the people in concrete bread-and-butter terms. As Bhupendranath Dutta later complained, the basic limitation lay in failing to realise the link between political and other kinds of freedom, social, economic, religious and intellectual.¹²⁵

Taken as a whole, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that revolutionary terrorism was a heroic failure. The British were certainly badly frightened, as shown by the intensity of repression, but their administration was never in any real danger of collapsing. The bombs took far greater toll of Indian subordinates than of their white overlords, and yet the rulers never lacked 'native' civil servants, clerks, policemen and soldiers. Even during the first world war, with the country largely denuded of British troops, the grandiose plans for armed insurrection based on foreign aid and subversion of the Indian regiments were all still-born. Rashbehari Basu had to flee to Japan, and Bagha Jatin died on the banks of the Buribalam, hunted down by the police with the active help of the local villagers. The incident seems symbolic—lacking a peasant base, the revolutionaries could never rise to the level of real guerilla action or set up 'liberated areas' in the countryside. As for the average edu-

¹²⁴ A copy of this pamphlet is enclosed in Home Political Progs Deposit, April 1911, n. 7.

¹²⁵ Bhupendranath Dutta, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-43.

cated Indian, he derived vicarious satisfaction from the deeds of the heroes, and watched and admired—from a distance.

Yet if, despite all its limitations, revolutionary terrorism remains a memorable and important part of our national heritage, this is not solely because of the innumerable acts of heroism which it called forth from so many people, known and unknown; even more impressive perhaps is the search for ever new paths to freedom which distinguished its best representatives. Hemchandra Kanungo's call for relentless selfcriticism, learning from past mistakes, and quest for new ideals¹²⁶ required an enormous amount of courage; it has always been only too easy and perhaps natural in persecuted revolutionary movements to confound heretics with renegades. But the challenge was taken up, with the result that many 'terrorists'—particularly of the Yugantar groups—eventually found their way back into the mainstream of a national movement which was slowly but surely breaking with its mendicant illusions, accepting purna swaraj as its goal and transcending with Gandhi the barriers of bhadrakalok society. Many others followed the path first traced out on the intellectual level by Hemchandra Kanungo, and from Bhupendranath Dutta and M. N. Roy through Ajoy Ghosh¹²⁷ to the 'communist consolidation'¹²⁸ in the Andaman and other jails, ex-terrorists have strengthened the ranks of the left in India.

¹²⁶ Hemchandra Kanungo, *op. cit.*, p. v.

¹²⁷ Close associate of Bhagat Singh in the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association; general secretary, from 1951 to his death in 1962, of the Communist Party of India.

¹²⁸ The formation in the mid-1930s after intensive debates of communist groups among the detenus in Andaman and other jails.

Chapter Ten

CONCLUSION

The swadeshi movement of 1903-8 leaves on the observer of the present day two major impressions, contradictory and yet perhaps equally valid—a sense of richness and promise, of national energies bursting out in diverse streams of political activity, intellectual debate and cultural efflorescence; and a feeling of disappointment, even anticlimax, at the blighting of so many hopes.

It seems wisest to begin with the qualifications, as the researcher so often is tempted to magnify the importance of his own period. In point of individual heroism, these five years cannot stand comparison with the annals of revolutionary terrorism which had just begun in 1908. In mass participation, the achievements of the age fell far short of what would be attained later by our national movement in 1919-22, 1930-34, 1942 and 1945-46. On the score of originality, too, excessive claims must be abjured. The partition was opposed at first mainly as an alleged threat to certain elite grievances and a peculiarly gross addition to the already familiar tale of white racial arrogance; the boycott found its rationale in arguments supplied by moderate economists; and there was nothing particularly novel about the methods of constitutional 'agitation' and bargaining with the rulers which engrossed all politicians down to 1905 and quite a number throughout the period. Boycott, swadeshi, national education, the use of imaginative techniques to draw in the masses—occasional anticipations of even these can be found in earlier periods, particularly perhaps in the Bengal of the 1860s and '70s.

What remains remarkable about the swadeshi age is the

simultaneous presence in it, at least in germ, of so many of the tendencies and forces which went on shaping the life of our people till 1947 and even beyond. The growing conviction that British and Indian interests were irreconcilable, and hence that what was needed was the clean surgical break of swaraj, not partial reforms within the system; the associated confidence in India's potentialities, making of swaraj a realisable goal; the first dim awareness of worldwide anti-imperialist—and socialist—currents; efforts to promote the autonomous development of national life through swadeshi industries and crafts, national schools and village societies; boycott of foreign goods, generalised step by step into a programme of passive resistance, anticipating in virtually every detail (minus the nonviolence dogma) the techniques of Gandhian noncooperation; volunteer organisations or samitis; labour unions with an element of political guidance; the use of the religious medium to overcome the barrier between the elite and the masses, and its unforeseen consequences in the sharpening of Hindu-Muslim tensions; the cult of the bomb—in all this and much more, the years 1903-8 were a microcosm revealing the rich diversity and the multifarious facets of Indian nationalism.

Cutting across the political lines of division raged the great ideological debate, so very relevant to us even today, which I have tried to analyse in terms of the not-very-satisfactory and probably oversimple categories of revivalism and modernism, but which may be redefined perhaps as our intelligentsia's search for identity amidst a maze of possible alternative loyalties—Bengali, Hindu (or Muslim), Indian. The political leadership of the '70s and '80s had achieved a kind of vision of a united India, secular and modernist in content. But the unity had been fragile and superficial, confined as it was to an Anglicised upper-class elite which in its behaviour seemed at times to be on the point of realising Macaulay's dream. With the spread of political consciousness and the growing disenchantment with British promises, deeper traditionalist, religious and regional loyalties were bound to assert themselves, and nationalism had to try to

anchor itself with such trends if it was ever to break out of its elitist shell.

Many in the swadeshi age thought for a time that a basis for a more purely indigenous and popular nationalism could be found in Hinduism—and so we had the curious but by no means unique¹ phenomenon of intellectuals utterly westernised in outlook and way of life striving by a tour de force to turn overnight into orthodox Hindus, imparting to age-old rituals and symbols a political content which was in fact quite untraditional. Thus Pal urged Bengalis to worship Durga “not merely as a pauranic deity or as a mythological figure, but as the visible representation of the eternal spirit of their race”,² and the *Bande Mataram* discovered in caste rules the germs of a “purified” conception of democracy and even of socialism.³ Such incongruous combinations probably left most genuinely orthodox people cold, and the riots of 1906-7 stimulated a process of rethinking at least in the minds of a few—most notably in Rabindranath. By 1908 there were some signs of a return to modernistic ideals, but on a higher plane which recognised more fully than ever before the true complexity of India’s problems, the paramount need for overcoming the alienation of the intellectual elite and bringing about genuine and stable Hindu-Muslim fraternity. Tagore’s great essays of 1907-8 have lost none of their freshness or relevance with time, and his *Gora* remains the classic symbol of modern India’s quest for identity.

More fruitful perhaps than the Hindu note was the identification with basic regional and linguistic loyalties. There were problems here too—the emphasis on Bengali language, culture and traditions did occasionally assume a

¹ A similar combination of radical political ideals with pseudotraditional religious propaganda may be seen in the pan-Islamism of Jamal-al-Din al-Afghani.

² “The Durga Puja”, *New India*, 24 September 1906—reprinted in Pal, *Swadeshi and swaraj*, p. 105.

³ “Caste and Democracy”—Editorial in *Bande Mataram*, 21 September 1907.

provincial and chauvinistic colour,⁴ and it is significant that while the swadeshi upsurge struck a chord in far-off Maharashtra, Punjab or even the South, the neighbouring Biharis, Oriyas and Assamese with few exceptions remained utterly aloof if not positively hostile to what was after all essentially a Bengali movement. But it is only fair to remember certain instances of genuine pan-Indian thinking, manifested for example in the 'Eka-lipi-vistara Parishad' set up in Calcutta in 1907 to promote Devanagari as the common script for all Indian languages.⁵ "Hindi ought to be the lingua franca of India as it is the easiest and the most largely spoken language in the country", declared the *Dawn* in June 1908; another issue of the same journal contained an adaptation of an article from the *Hindustan Review* of Allahabad pointing out the dangers of making that language too Sanskritised or Persianised, and preferring the term Hindusthani, since "it does not savour of the Hindu too prominently".⁶ Thus the Bengali nationalist of 1905, still serenely confident of the leading position of his community in the cultural and political life of the subcontinent, could combine with relative ease deep regional patriotism with a more abstract but still real identification with India as a whole—a combination which would prove increasingly difficult from the 1920s onwards, as the centre of gravity in the national movement shifted to Gujarat and Hindi-speaking Upper India.

Future problems notwithstanding, however, the Bengali patriotism of the swadeshi days brought forth an extremely impressive cultural outcrop, and the poet Satyendranath Dutta was not indulging in excessive hyperbole when he hailed in 1905 "the golden age that has dawned in Bengal".⁷ The impact was of course most obvious in songs, poems,

⁴ As for instance in the talk of Assamese 'backwardness' in the early days of the antipartition agitation—cf. above, Chapter II, p. 41.

⁵ *Dawn and Dawn Society's Magazine*, January 1908.

⁶ "Hindusthani Language as the Common Language of India"—adapted from an article by V. N. Mehta, ICS, in the *Hindustan Review* (Allahabad)—*Ibid.*, October 1908.

⁷ "Banga-itihasa aj elo swarna yuga!"—*Sandikshan* (1905)

plays and jattras, and the vitally important political role of these art forms in propagating the swadeshi cause has been discussed in a previous chapter.⁸ The high seriousness and intellectual and literary quality of the innumerable essays on swadeshi themes published during these years in the periodical press cannot but fail to arouse our admiration. Much less evident was the influence on fiction, except for a few short stories of Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay⁹ and two little-known novels of Gangacharan Nag and Narayanchandra Bhattacharyya¹⁰—as well as of course Rabindranath's *Gora* (1907-10) and *Ghare-baire* (1915), so invaluable for understanding the inner tensions of the age. The Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, founded in 1894, entered upon the period of its greatest activity and influence under the enthusiastic stewardship of Ramendrasundar Trivedi (secretary of the organisation from 1904 to 1911) and Byomkesh Mustafi. The Bangiya Sahitya Sammilan, an annual literary conference, met for the first time in 1907 with Rabindranath in the chair.¹¹

As in the Ireland of Yeats's youth, nationalism stimulated interest in literary history and folk traditions, indicated for instance in the researches of Dineshchandra Sen, and at another level by *Thakumar jhuli* (Grandma's Tales, 1907), Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's immortal collection of fairy tales of old Bengal.¹²

⁸ Cf. above, Chapter VI. The best available account of the impact of swadeshi on literature is Soumendra Gangopadhyay, *Swadeshi andolan o bangla sahitya* (1960).

⁹ *Khalash* describes the conversion to patriotism of a Bengali magistrate through the influence of his wife; *Ukiler buddhi* ridicules the sycophancy of a lawyer; *Hate hate phal* is about an oppressive police constable. *Prabasi*, Bhadra 1314 (1907), Kartik 1314 (1907), Sravana 1315 (1908).

¹⁰ *Rakhi-kankan* (1907), *Nabibidhan* (1907). For a description of these two novels, cf. Soumendra Gangopadhyay, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-94.

¹¹ *Sahitya-sadhak-charitmalā*, Volume VI, n. 70 (Ramendrasundar Trivedi).

¹² Rabindranath emphasised the swadeshi importance of the indigenous fairy-tale in his preface to the first edition of *Thakumar jhuli*—even

Historical research in the more conventional sense also felt the swadeshi wind—Nikhilnath Roy's chronicles of Murshidabad (1898, 1904); Akshoykumar Maitra's famous biographies of Sirajuddoula (1897) and Mir Kasim (1905); the journal *Aitihāsik Chitra* and the Varendra Research Society of Rajshahi, both founded by Akshoykumar; the more enduring works of Haraprasad Sastri and Rakhaldas Banerji; and the first writings of the talented young men whom Satischandra Mukherji had collected around his *Dawn*—including Radhakumud Mukherji, Haranchandra Chakladar, Rabindranarayan Ghosh and the sociologist Benoykumar Sarkar. An occasional contributor to the *Dawn* was Jadunath Sarkar, who had just begun his masterly studies of Mughal and Maratha history with *India of Aurangzeb* (1901).¹³

More indirect but still undoubted was the impact on science. The achievements of J. C. Bose and P. C. Ray thrilled all patriotic hearts, the *Prabasi* going so far as to call Jagadishchandra's *Plant Response* the greatest swadeshi event of 1906.¹⁴ Science and patriotism were closely associated in the work of these pioneers, who felt, quite rightly, that their research was helping to put India and Bengal on the map of world culture—a consciousness vividly reflected, for instance, in the correspondence between J. C. Bose and his intimate friend Rabindranath. The great physicist and his wife also became close friends of Nivedita. Prafullachandra Ray founded through his magnificent teaching something like an 'Indian school of chemistry';¹⁵ his *History of Hindu Chemistry* (1902, 1909) represented one of the best fruits of swadeshi scholarship—and he was also perhaps the most remarkable of the swadeshi industrial entrepreneurs. The closing years of the

such things, he said, had so long been coming from the "Manchester factory".

¹³ Bimalaprasad Mukherji, *History—Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, pp. 371-81.

¹⁴ *Prabasi*, Bhadra 1313 (1906).

¹⁵ The phrase is used by Prafullachandra himself—*Life and Experiences of a Bengali Chemist*, Volume I, Chapter XIII.

swadeshi epoch saw a real galaxy of brilliant young science students studying more or less together in Presidency College, and between 1910 and 1913 graduated Rasiklal Dutta, Nilratan Dhar, Jnanendrachandra Ghosh, Jnanendranath Mukhopadhyay, Meghnad Saha, Satyendranath Bose.¹⁶

The Indian Sangita Samaj founded in 1897 by Jyotirindranath Tagore and the Maharaja of Natore¹⁷ promoted the cause of classical Indian music in Calcutta; by 1905 this music club had acquired, interestingly enough, some political notoriety.¹⁸ But most fascinating of all perhaps was the impact of swadeshi on art. Stimulated by the orientalist enthusiasm of Okakura, Nivedita and Havell as well as by the contact with the visiting Japanese artists Taikan and Hisida, Abanindranath Tagore and his pupils broke sharply with the imitations of Victorian naturalist taste which had come to dominate what there was of Indian art in the late 19th century. They turned back for inspiration to the great heritage of India, Mughal and Rajput paintings and the superb art of Ajanta—a heritage which men like Griffiths, Fergusson and Rajendralal Mitra had begun to explore way back in the 1870s, but which became an influence on living artists only in the swadeshi days.¹⁹ The Indian Society of Oriental Art was founded in March 1907, and held periodic exhibitions of the new style; among the first recipients of the society's scholarships was Nandalal Bose.²⁰ Some of

¹⁶ List of First Class Graduates—*Presidency College Centenary Volume* (1956), pp. 97, 100.

¹⁷ *Indian Mirror*, 2 October 1897, 26 January 1898.

¹⁸ The Sangita Samaj is listed among 'Clubs and societies in Calcutta, which have been concerned in the present swadeshi movement'—Report on the Agitation Against the Partition of Bengal, 25 January 1906, Enclosure H—Home Public Progs A. June 1906. n. 175.

¹⁹ Asok Mitra, *The Forces Behind the Modern Movement—Four Painters* (1965), pp. 1-4.

²⁰ Rabindranarayan Ghosh, "Indian Nationalism and Indian Art"—*Dawn*, May, June, September 1910. An India Society was set up in 1910 to popularise the school in England with Havell, Rothenstein, Coomaraswami and Ratcliffe among its leading members—*Dawn*, November 1910.

Abanindranath's paintings had a direct political content, most notably his *Bharat-mata* (Mother India) which sent Nivedita into ecstasies²¹ and served as a banner in some swadeshi demonstrations;²² his more adventurous brother and fellow-artist Gaganendranath even had some revolutionary connections.²³ And in a well-known poem Satyendranath Dutta hailed the rekindling "in this city of ours" of the lamp once lit by India's great artist Dhiman.²⁴ The permanent artistic value of this first phase of the Calcutta school is more open to question. There were some contemporary critics—like Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri, who warned against the danger of a total rejection of western canons and models,²⁵ or the *Sahitya* commentator who accused neotraditionalist art of being "contrary to nature and bonelessly serpentine".²⁶ Even Coomaraswami, the theorist of 'Art and Swadeshi', had to admit that compared to its classical models, the new art was all too often "sentimental in conception, weak in drawing", and "frequently markedly lacking in strength".²⁷ Fortunately, however, the great

²¹ The *Prabasi* of Bhadra 1313 reproduced the *Bharat-mata* with a note by Nivedita hailing it as "the first masterpiece in which an Indian artist has actually succeeded in disengaging, as it were, the spirit of the motherland—giver of Faith and Learning, of Clothing and Food—and portraying Her, as She appears in the eyes of Her children..."

²² Abanindranath Tagore and Rani Chanda, *Gharoa* (1941), p. 9.

²³ Statement of Abinash Bhattacharyya—Bhupendranath Dutta. *Bharater dwitiya swadhinata sangram*, p. 196.

²⁴ *Ekada je dwip jwālalo Dhiman se dwip aji e nagari jwale Pancha pradip Abani Gagan Asit Mukul Nandalal-e/*

²⁵ Upendrakishore objected in particular to Havell's removal of western paintings from the Government Art College, and embarked upon two long controversies with Abanindranath in the pages of the *Bhandar* (Jaistha 1312/1905) and *Modern Review* (April-June 1907). The father of Sukumar Ray and the grandfather of Satyajit Ray, Upendrakishore himself was a noted artist, photographer, innovator in printing technique and writer of exquisite tales for children.

²⁶ *Sahitya*, Baisakh 1317 (1910)—cited in Asok Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁷ A. K. Coomaraswami, *The Modern School of Indian Painting* (1911)—quoted in Asok Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

artists soon outgrew the patriotic drill. Abanindranath experimented with ever-new forms, his brother tried his hand at cubism, and from the 1920s Rabindranath began his amazing series of paintings, utterly and magnificently different from the somewhat anaemic pseudoclassicism of much of later 'oriental' art. "Swadeshi had served its turn, but served better still as it slowly retired from the scene."²⁸

No other phase of our national movement can boast of a cultural accompaniment as rich as swadeshi, and it is noteworthy how many of the songs which inspired later generations of patriots—whether terrorist, Gandhian, or communist—were composed in the partition days.²⁹ But it would be extremely unwise to try to gauge the depth and importance of the movement itself by the richness of its cultural outcrop. Literature, after all, is bound to remain very much of an elite concern, particularly in a society like ours with its abysmally low literacy rate, and the historian must avoid the temptation of looking at an age through the eyes of its intellectuals alone.³⁰

A sense of anticlimax is in fact bound to haunt any historian of swadeshi Bengal. Partition was revoked, it is true, after six years; but by then Curzon's original folly had become a minor issue for most patriots. The reforms of 1909, too belated and paltry to really satisfy even the moderates, were vitiated by the simultaneous encouragement they gave to Muslim separatism. The ideal of complete swaraj came to be cherished by the underground revolutionaries alone—the mainstream of the national movement accepted it only twenty years later. Boycott had come and gone, leaving hardly a dent in the rising curve of foreign imports; swadeshi indus-

²⁸ Asok Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

²⁹ The latest—and by far the most moving—example is of course the adoption of Rabindranath's 'Amar sonar bangla' as the national anthem by embattled Bangladesh.

³⁰ Thus, to give a converse example, it is difficult to accept R. C. Majumdar's denigration of 1857 on the ground of that great rebellion having failed to arouse the sympathy of "contemporary Indian writers". *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Volume I, p. 242.

tries and national schools petered out; the trade unions proved extremely shortlived; and most of the samitis were crushed by the police with surprising ease. Of the diverse trends which had composed the rich tapestry of the swadeshi age, only the two poles remained active after 1908—on the one hand a mendicancy as servile and even less effective than pre-1905 politics, on the other the heroic blind alley of the terrorists. On the level of ideals, too, Rabindranath's lofty dream of building a mahajati in our land remained no more than a solitary vision.

The decline was only temporary, to be sure, as the Gandhian movement was to reveal after 1918, reviving many of the forms and techniques of the swadeshi days; but the fall in tempo during the intervening years remains an indisputable fact. In the drama of Dwijendralal Roy, the strident patriotism of Rana Pratapsingh (May 1905) gave place to the quiet introspective melancholy of Mewar-patan (December 1908)—the red flag flies no more over the hill of Mewar,³¹ Chitor is lost, but its people can still try "to become men again"³² by conquering the weaknesses in their own society. The unity of humanist values and socially effective action which had been Rabindranath's ideal in Gora has broken down, and we are faced instead with the stark *Ghare-baire* dichotomy of Nikhilesh and Sandwip.

It has been one of the central themes of the previous chapters that this failure cannot be explained in terms of police repression alone—thus it is significant that only two cases of firing on demonstrators are on record for the entire 1903-8 period, and the men involved were Jamalpur railwaymen on strike and Sherpur Muslim rioters, not swadeshi crowds. The failure resulted rather from certain inner weaknesses—at once social and religious—of the movement itself, in particular the inability to draw in the peasant masses and to bridge the gulf between the Hindus and the Mus-

³¹ *Mewar-pahar, shikhare tahar, rakta-pataka ore na ar*

E heena sajja, e ghoru lajja, dheke de gabheera andhakar/

³² *Kisher shoka karish bhai—abar tora manush ha*

Gyecche desh dukkha nai—abar tora manush ha/

lims. In a concluding essay, it seems proper to sum up in more general terms the social character of the movement, as well as the structural limitations which ultimately led to its decline.

No great difficulty exists in specifying the social groups attracted by swadeshi. Students and educated young men in general obviously deserve pride of place as contributing the bulk of the samiti volunteers. Among their elders, the members of the *bhadralok* professions of law, teaching, journalism and medicine in town and country were particularly prominent; while the swadeshi spectrum extended to include a number of big zamindars at one end of the social scale, and, at the other, 'amlas' or officials and dependants of patriotic landlords and considerable segments of clerks or white-collar employees in government offices, private firms and even certain industries.³³

Professional men, families which could afford higher education for their sons, even clerks in some cases—still very often had a connection with land in the form of intermediate tenures, if not zamindari shares, and going through the official records, one sometimes gets the impression that all that was happening in the districts was landlord coercion of tenants into giving up *bideshi* articles. "Where boycott and political agitation are most dangerous and mischievous", asserted a report on the conduct of the Gauripur landlords, "either local zamindars or local zamindari servants are at the bottom of the mischief".³⁴ Hare reminded Minto of the "terrible power" of the "unscrupulous landlord",³⁵ while the viceroy on his part had already informed the secretary of state "of the resemblance in the new province to our Irish difficulties",³⁶ with the proswadeshi Hindu zamindars.

³³ See above, Chapters V-VII.

³⁴ Conduct of the Zamindars of Gauripur in Connection with the Political Agitation in the Mymensingh District—Home Political Progs A, February 1908, n. 102-3.

³⁵ Hare to Minto, 21 November 1907—Minto Papers, M981.

³⁶ Minto to Morley, 15 August 1906—Minto Papers, M1006.

dar being obviously cast for the part of the absentee English landlord.

It is possible, however, to misinterpret or overemphasise the link between swadeshi and zamindari pressure, real as the connection was at certain localities and times. The Anglo-Indian bureaucrat always liked to think of himself as paternal protector of the raiyat, and the Irish parallel had an obvious propaganda value in convincing a Liberal administration increasingly at loggerheads with the House of Lords of the need for a tough policy in India. Actually the importance of the big zamindar in the swadeshi movement seems to have been considerably exaggerated. In the first—highly respectable—phase of the antipartition agitation, such men were certainly very prominent—Manindrachandra Nandi of Kasimbazar, the Maharaja of Natore, Maharaja Jyotindramohan Tagore. Sitnath Roy of Bhagyakul, Maharaja Surjyakanta Acharyya Chaudhuri of Muktagacha. Asutosh Chaudhuri of Pabna and even Pearymohun Mukherji of Uttarpara (who in 1898 had denounced “the irrepressible regiment of Congress leaders”³⁷); the Bengal Landholders’ Association was also extremely active.³⁸ But the already-established literary stereotype of the zaminder as title-hunting opportunist³⁹ was soon confirmed by the hasty retreat of the big names—Girijanath Roy of Dinajpur as early as October 1906;⁴⁰ the Maharaja of Darbhanga, who

³⁷ At the annual meeting of the British Indian Association, 30 July 1898—a speech violently attacked by the future swadeshi leader Aswinicoomar Banerji in letters published in the *Indian Mirror*, 18 August, 15 and 23 September 1898. Rabindranath commented on this ‘Mukherji-Banerji’ duel in two articles—“Mukherjje banam barrujje” (*Bharati*, Bhadra 1305/August-September 1898) and “Apar paksher katha” (*Ibid*, Aswin 1305/September-October 1898).

³⁸ See above, Chapter VII.

³⁹ As for instance in Amritlal Basu’s *Sabash bangali*, Act II, Scene II, and Haranath Basu’s play *Jagaran* described in *Anrita Bazar Patrika*, 5 January 1906, where an unpatriotic zamindar is brought to his senses by social boycott.

⁴⁰ Abstract of Reports...from Eastern Bengal and Assam during first half of October 1906—Home Public Progs A, December 1906, n. 310-11.

by December 1906 had discovered that "with the Hindus Loyalty or Rajbhiakti is an element of religion";⁴¹ the 107 zaminder signatories to the British Indian Association loyalist manifesto of 8 August 1907, including even Surjyakanta Acharyya Chaudhuri;⁴² and Sitanath Roy, offering after May 1908 his "support to measures however stringent for the suppression of anarchy".⁴³ The classic example of consistent servility came, however, from the Maharaja of Burdwan, who fully maintained his family's 1857 record by erecting at the height of the swadeshi movement a Curzon Gate, tartly described by the *Bengalee* as both ludicrous in appearance and a hindrance to traffic.⁴⁴ While there were some generous zamindar patrons of swadeshi enterprise like Manindraachandra Nandi or Bipradas Palchaudhuri of Nadia, from many even financial help was not too readily forthcoming—as indicated by the interesting if libellous police report giving a list of "uncollected (probably irrecoverable) donations to the National Fund up to 31 August 1906",⁴⁵ as well as by the fact that the revolutionaries from

⁴¹ Speech at a meeting of the Sri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal—*Bengalee*, 25 December 1906.

⁴² Diary of Political Events 1907—Home Political Progs Deposit, March 1908, n. 1. *Sandhya*, 19 August 1907—RNP(B) for week ending 24 August 1907.

⁴³ Diary of Political Events, 1908, entry for 9 July—Home Political Progs Deposit, March 1909, n. 1.

⁴⁴ *Bengalee*, 11 January 1907.

⁴⁵ Here is the list in full:

Names of Persons	Donations	Amount	Actually	Balance
	Promised (Rs)	Paid	(Rs)	
Maharaja Surjya Kanta (Mymensingh)	10,000	—		10,000
T. Palit (Calcutta)	5,000	1,000		4,000
Manindra Nandy (Cossimbazar)	5,000	—		5,000
Santosh Brothers (Calcutta)	3,000	1,000		2,000
Giridhari & Janaki Roy (Calcutta)	5,000	1,500		3,500
Dighapatia (Calcutta)	2,500	1,100		1,400
Gajendranath Tagore (Calcutta)	5,000	100		4,900
Abdul Sobhan Chaudhuri (Mymensingh)	1,000	200		800

an early date had to take to the path of swadeshi docoity. Only a small minority among big zamindars remained active throughout in radical politics, the most notable of them being Brojendrakishore Roychaudhuri of Gauripur,⁴⁶ Narendralal Khan of Narajole, Digambar Nanda of Contai,⁴⁷ Rajendranath Mukherji or Misri Babu of Uttarpara (the son of Pearymohun) and Jatindranath Raychaudhuri of Taki.⁴⁸ As has been repeatedly indicated in previous chapters, the really ubiquitous social element in swadeshi organisations was not the big zamindar—extremely helpful as his presence was always recognised to be—but the intermediate tenure-holder, particularly numerous in well-known storm-centres like Barisal, Madaripur, Vikrampur or Kishore

Names of Persons	Donations	Amount Actually	Balance
	Promised (Rs)	Paid (Rs)	
Maharaja of Natore	1,000	—	1,000
Debendranath Tagore	1,000	—	1,000
Jogendrachandra Bose (Chander-nagore)	1,000	200	800
Anathnath Mullick (Chorebagan)	500	—	500
Jogendranath „ („)	500	—	500
Surendranath „ („)	500	50	450
Charuchandra „ (Pataldanga)	500	100	400
Nalin Behari Sirkar (Calcutta)	500	250	250
Total :	42,000	5,500	36,500

—Abstract of Reports from Bengal during the Second Half of August 1906, Home Public Progs B, October 1906, n. 13.

⁴⁶ The local government wanted to attach his lands in January 1908, a proposal vetoed by the government of India. Home Public Progs A, February 1908, n. 102-3.

⁴⁷ For the revolutionary activities of these two Midnapur zamindars. see Benoyjiban Ghosh, *Agniyuger astraguru hemchandra*, pp. 53-57 and Home Political Progs A, March 1910, n. 33-40.

⁴⁸ Both Rajendranath and Jatindranath figured in the March 1910 list of 53 proposed deportees—the latter because “an abnormal number of the members of the revolutionary party have come from the villages of Taki and Arbelia, which is close by”. Home Political Progs A, March 1910, n. 33-40.

gunj;⁴⁹ but here again surely an Aswini Dutta, a Kaliprasanna Dasgupta, an Ambicacharan Majumdar or a Surendranath Sen owed their popularity and leadership much more to their professional roles as teachers or pleaders than to their status as minor landholders.

If the precise social groups drawn into swadeshi can be identified fairly easily, much more problematic is the attempt to bring together the swadeshi participants under some more general category of class or status group—a difficult but necessary task, if swadeshi is to be related to the social and economic conditions of its own age as well as to the phenomenon of nationalism in other countries and times.

Proceeding on the analogy of European nationalist movements, many have been tempted to see in swadeshi an essentially “middle class” affair, an important stage in India’s advance along “bourgeois-democratic” lines. Moderate and extremist may then even appear to have some resemblance to Girondin and Jacobin. “In its earliest phase”, wrote Rajani Palme Dutt, “Indian nationalism...reflected only the big bourgeoisie”; swadeshi, on the other hand, “reflected the discontent of the urban petty bourgeoisie, but did not yet reach the masses”.⁵⁰ Dutt added the rider that the Hindu-revivalist ideology of the extremists severely curtailed the progressive possibilities of their movement; with much less inhibition, recent Soviet historians like Reisner or Komarov proclaim the “petty-bourgeois democratic” character of the 1905 upsurge.⁵¹

A distinction between various levels of analysis seems necessary here. In very general terms, there can be little doubt that the Indian national movement of which swadeshi was such an important part objectively did help to at least partially clear the way for the independent capitalist development of our country. Subjectively too on the level of economic ideals, the moderate intellectuals with their conception

⁴⁹ See above, Chapter VII.

⁵⁰ R. P. Dutt, *India Today* (2nd edition, 1947), p. 264.

⁵¹ Reisner and Goldberg (ed), *Tilak and the Struggle for Indian Freedom* (1966).

of modern industry as the panacea for India's woes were visualising the future of the country in terms broadly capitalist in nature. The swadeshi-extremist modifications in that programme often remind the historian of the petty-bourgeois critique of big capital so common in European romantic thought—though here the parallel was hardly complete, as we have seen,⁵² and apart from the handful of pioneer barrister labour-leaders (hardly petty-bourgeois and not invariably extremist), there was precious little awareness of the evils of capitalism as affecting concretely the lives of Indian workers; the critique of factory industries developed rather from a general nationalist rejection of western models. Conscious contemporary use of the middle-class analogy is also not too rare. Thus Aswinicoomar Banerji in his polemic with Peary-mohun Mukherji asserted that "It is the middle-class gentry who form the backbone of the Congress", not the "mushroom aristocracy",⁵³ and Bepinchandra Pal declared in 1906 that the extremists were "making an appeal to the country... calling up the masses everywhere, the common shopkeeper and artisan, the Musulman trader and Marwari broker and sowkar—men who had rarely been invited before to attend our meetings..."⁵⁴ But the simplistic version of the Marxian class-approach used by R. P. Dutt or certain Soviet historians still encounters major difficulties if we pass from ideology to questions of social composition. Pal's hopes notwithstanding, there remain the inconvenient facts of the indifference or even hostility shown towards swadeshi by the bulk of the professional trading community in Bengal, and the at best lukewarm attitude of the industrial bourgeoisie of Bombay and Gujarat.⁵⁵ Glib talk about the 'urban' petty-bourgeois character of the 1905 upsurge obscures the link which so many of the swadeshi participants retained with land through zamindari or intermediate tenure. Despite certain 'bourgeois'

⁵² See above, Chapter III, 1.

⁵³ *Indian Mirror*, 23 September 1898. See f.n. 37 above.

⁵⁴ "The Shell and the Seed"—*Bande Mataram*, 17 September 1906.

⁵⁵ A. P. Kannangara, "Indian Millowners and Indian Nationalism"—*Past and Present*, No. 40 (July 1968).

aspirations, the Bengali 'middle class' was thus essentially different from its European counterpart in being virtually unconnected with capitalist forms of trade, industry or agriculture—whence perhaps the peculiar ineptitude of so much of swadeshi entrepreneurship. The broadening of nationalism during 1905-8 evidently involved the spread of political consciousness among certain lower-income groups (e.g. the white-collar employees of printing presses and railways, so prominent in the strikes of the period); a clear class-differential between moderate and extremist would still be very difficult to establish, and was obviously nonexistent at the leadership level.

The alternative *bhadralok* category—currently so fashionable among western historians, no doubt partly because it seems to keep Marxism in its place⁵⁶—has the merit of emphasising the very real social barrier in our country (in 1905 and to a considerable extent even today) between the *babu* or gentleman, the man with some amount of education, clean clothes and hands unsoiled with manual labour, who must be addressed as '*apni*' even if his purse happens to be nearly empty, and the men who work with their hands in fields or factories. Despite some efforts to organise jute mill-hands, or the popularity enjoyed by a leader like Aswinikumar Dutta among ordinary Barisal villagers, it cannot be denied that swadeshi remained basically a *bhadralok* affair. The trouble about this term, in fact, is that it seems much too broad, ranging presumably from the Maharaja of Mymensingh to the East Indian Railway clerk; it consequently offers little or no real guide in any study of socio-economic compulsions behind political action. The subcate-

⁵⁶ Thus Anil Seal assures us that the Marxian class analysis is quite inappropriate in 19th or early 20th century Indian conditions. "Social classes based on economic categories" did not yet exist, and so nationalism must be explained in terms of Bengali *bhadralok* or Chitpavan Brahmin status-aspirations, and not as the upthrust of an emerging national bourgeoisie. *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism—Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century* (1968), p. 34 and *passim*.

gory of 'lower-class bhadrak' invented by J. H. Broomfield⁵⁷ to explain the broader appeals of extremism and Gandhism hardly improves matters; the petty-bourgeoisie, it seems, is making a shame-faced reentrance. The tacit identification often made between bhadrak and certain Hindu upper castes (Brahmin, Vaidya, Kayastha) is also not quite tenable—how are we to categorise, for example, a Brahmin cook or a village priest?

Still more controversial and open to question are the attempts so often being made today to interpret nationalism as being no more than a rationalisation of selfish and narrow status interests. The bhadrak became anti-British, we are told in effect by historians like Anil Seal or J. H. Broomfield, primarily because their job-aspirations were not satisfied and their professional and rent-incomes were being eroded by the rise in prices; the talk about the country as a whole suffering from imperialist exploitation is assumed to have been no more than an ideological trapping, not to be taken too seriously.⁵⁸ Thus we have a kind of Namierisation—without of course Namier's massive command over a rich variety of sources, ruled out here for many by the language barrier. The *reductio ad absurdum* of this approach is provided by Seal, with his—one hopes, only half-serious—comment on Bankimchandra's patriotic novels arising out of frustration in his job.⁵⁹

Interpretations of bhadrak nationalism in terms of educated unemployment and price-increase were common enough, for fairly obvious reasons, among early-20th century British officials and apologists⁶⁰—the minds of contemporary

⁵⁷ J. H. Broomfield. *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society—Twentieth-Century Bengal* (1968).

⁵⁸ A somewhat similar approach is being tried out nowadays in the history of West Asian nationalism—see for instance Elie Kedourie. *Afghani and Abduh* (London, 1966).

⁵⁹ Anil Seal, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁶⁰ As for instance Valentine Chirol's *Indian Unrest* (1910) and the *Bengal District Administration Committee Report of 1915*. The latter found Chirol's estimate of the absolute volume of educated unemployment to be exaggerated, but emphasised the very low salaries

Anglo-Indian bureaucrats and present-day pseudo-Namierite scholars often seem to work in significant unison. The directness of the link between economics and political action may still be questioned. A 1915 analysis of "several hundred" East Bengal political suspects found 43 per cent to have sufficient private means and 15 per cent with satisfactory jobs; of the remaining 42 per cent unemployed or working on scanty salaries, quite a number must have remained jobless out of political choice.⁶¹ The price-rise was spectacular enough during 1905-8⁶², and the abovequoted report emphasised the "distress among the smaller noncultivating tenure-holders"⁶³ caused by it. But the rise in agricultural prices may have benefited those among the *bhadralok* who drew rents in kind—and the *Bakargunj District Gazetteer* (1918) spoke of the growing Hindu upper-caste preference for letting out land on *barga* or sharecropping terms⁶⁴; obviously there is considerable scope here for detailed research into the economic position of *bhadralok* tenure-holders—a task beyond the scope of the present work and the competence of its author. For what it is worth, one might add that the swadeshi political agitators not unoften give an impression of relative economic stability, at least as compared to more recent times. Sukumar Mitra, the son of Krishnakumar and one of the leaders of the Anti-Circular Society, informed me in an interview that volunteers in those days were never given anything like party wages—presumably they could live on their own. One recalls also the volunteers in Mukunda Das's *jatra*, so sure of their "mere rice and dal".⁶⁵ The price-rise certainly caused distress and

(from Rs 10 to Rs 30 a month) of most clerks in private trading concerns, private school-teachers and zamindari officials—such men, it stated, formed a kind of disgruntled "intellectual proletariat"—pp. 163. 171-72.

⁶¹ *Bengal District Administration Committee Report*, p. 168.

⁶² See above, p. 25 for the K. L. Dutta Committee estimates.

⁶³ *Bengal District Administration Committee Report*, p. 164.

⁶⁴ *Bakargunj District Gazetteer* (1918). p. 72.

⁶⁵ Mukunda Das, *Palli-seva* (n.d), Scene II, p. 7. See above, Chapter VII.

contributed to strikes as well as to the Mymensingh riots of 1906-7⁶⁶; the crucial point is that such discontent did not necessarily have to take anti-British forms—usually it turned against the immediate local oppressor: zamindar, mahajan, trader, even sometimes the swadeshi agitator trying to banish the cheaper foreign articles from the market. The one swadeshi pamphlet that I know of dealing with the price issue as its principal subject began with a refutation of the argument—obviously not uncommon—that boycott was responsible for the dearness of goods.⁶⁷ Thus economic distress could lead to nationalist politics only via the ‘mediation’ of an ideology—in this case the theory of British economic exploitation; and yet some recent historians apparently believe that the drain theory may be almost ignored while studying the emergence of Indian nationalism.⁶⁸

Both the current Marxist interpretations and their elitist alternatives thus suffer from the common defect of assuming too direct or crude an economic motivation for political action and ideals. The former seek to relate nationalism far too mechanically with the general structure of colonial exploitation; the latter in contrast conjure away such connections, and explaining political unrest in terms of material elite-interests, virtually dismiss imperialism itself as a myth.

On the methodological level, it seems necessary today to break out of the bog of narrow positivism, which arbitrarily denies to historical personalities the ability to see beyond their noses—an attitude very obviously present in theoreticians of the *bhadralok* and by no means absent in much current ‘Marxist’ history-writing. Shorn of certain dogmatic oversimplifications alien to the spirit of its founders, the Marxist approach still seems much more relevant to the problems of Indian nationalism than its fashionable elitist substitutes. A certain divergence between the objective character of a movement as judged by its general results,

⁶⁶ See above, Chapter VIII, iii.

⁶⁷ Surjyakumar Ghoshal, *Bharate annakashta* (February 1908), p. 1.

⁶⁸ See for example the extremely cursory treatment of this subject in Anil Seal.

and the actual social composition of its participants, is by no means peculiar to swadeshi Bengal. As Isaac Deutscher reminds us, even the English and the French revolutions can be meaningfully considered "bourgeois" primarily because they created "the conditions in which bourgeois property can flourish"—and not because capitalist entrepreneurs, merchants or bankers were particularly conspicuous in Puritan or Jacobin ranks.⁶⁹ One might use here also Trotsky's very interesting concept of 'substitutism'—a recurrent theme according to him of nineteenth-century Russian history, with the intelligentsia acting repeatedly as a kind of proxy for as-yet passive social forces with which it had little organic connection.⁷⁰ It might even be profitable to consider the politically-active groups in the early stages of Indian nationalism as an 'intelligentsia' of this kind, since what most obviously distinguished them from the rest of society was not class or caste consciousness but education and its concomitant—responsiveness to nationalist ideology. Also extremely relevant might be the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's brilliant but little-known analysis of the formation and role of the 'traditional', as distinct from the 'organic', intellectuals; men of learning, not directly connected with the production-process, who for that very reason may be swayed by new cultural or ideological forces to the point of being won over in part by the emergent revolutionary class.⁷¹ The English-educated elite of Bengal, recruited overwhelmingly from the tradi-

⁶⁹ Isaac Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution—Russia 1917-1967* (1967), pp. 21-22.

⁷⁰ Thus the Decembrists had 'substituted' for the liberal bourgeoisie, the Narodniks for a mute peasantry and the early Russian Marxists for the still-largely-unorganised proletariat. Trotsky first outlined this theory in a brilliant essay written in 1912—Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed* (1954), p. 190. In his *History of the Russian Revolution* (1934), Trotsky saw substitutism as a notable characteristic of backward societies striving to modernise themselves—Volume I, Chapter I, p. 30.

⁷¹ Antonio Gramsci, "The Formation of Intellectuals", *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (1957).

tional learned castes, and virtually unconnected after the 1850s with commerce or industry (or even with agriculture, in the sense of real productive enterprise), may be regarded perhaps as a 'traditional' intelligentsia in Gramsci's sense, responding readily—if often a bit superficially—to world ideological currents—liberalism, nationalism, eventually in part even socialism.

The ultimately more fundamental facts of socio-economic structure should be considered, I suggest, as setting limits to effective political action, rather than motivating it in any direct or crude way. Thus irrespective of his precise economic condition, the price-rise and the threat to outside employment opportunities must have made the *bhadrak* tenure-holder more conscious of the value of his rent-income—whence perhaps the complete absence of any radical agrarian programme, in contrast to the 1870s and '80s. And precisely here, as we have seen in earlier chapters⁷², lay the crucial weakness of the entire *swadeshi* movement—its failure to break through to the peasant masses. Not Jacobin France, therefore, but *Risorgimento* Italy offers the best European parallel to Bengal extremism: "To effectively counter the moderate programme, they had to create an alternative programme that would attract the rural masses, almost four-fifths of the people. Only an economic and social programme of the 'Jacobin' type would have offered a viable alternative to moderate politics... (But) the petty-bourgeois social base of the actionists retained a semiagrarian character that limited its autonomy vis-a-vis the older landowning class and also made it fear the possible economic demands of the peasantry... Finally, the 'national' character of the *Risorgimento*—its goal of expelling the Austrians and forming an Italian state—made it easy for the moderates, and even some actionists, to neglect the social character of the revolution in the interests of achieving the largest possible unity of action."⁷³

⁷² See above, Chapter VI, pp. 333-35; Chapter VII, pp. 359, 389-90.

⁷³ Gramsci's famous analysis of the *Risorgimento*, almost uncannily

In Bengal, the intelligentsia's indifference to peasant problems did not result merely from immediate material interests; behind it lay also the long bhadrakok tradition of contempt or at best condescension for the men who worked with their hands, the sense of alienation flowing from education through a foreign medium, as well as by the fact that the line of demarcation between bhadrakok landholder and peasant commoner tended in some districts to merge with that separating Hindus from Muslims. Here again the connection is not that of direct motivation—nationalism was certainly far more than a mere rationalisation of bhadrakok Hindu injured vanity. But it has to be admitted that the average Bengali swadeshi agitator or extremist entered politics with a stock of inherited assumptions and attitudes—all the more dangerous for being very largely unconscious—concerning the uneducated common folk and in particular the Muslims among them. Such an inheritance obviously inhibited not only the formulation of radical social programmes, but also—despite some sincere efforts and in significant contrast to Gandhism—the working-out of a political idiom or style with genuine mass appeal.

It is possible to argue, of course, that even if the intelligentsia had taken a more positive propeasant (and consistently secular) stance, the countryside may have remained unresponsive—one might recall the tragedy of the Narodniks of nineteenth-century Russia. Certainly the early periods of Indian nationalism, extremist as well as moderate, seem to have coincided with a relative lull in peasant movements, extending from the 1880s to the upsurges of the post-first-world-war years. The peasant world of India and Bengal still awaits its historian, and only detailed research on agrarian conditions and peasant psychology might help us one day to understand the roots of what is perhaps modern India's greatest tragedy—the failure to intermingle the currents of national and social discontent into a single anticolonial and

antifeudal revolution. Coming back to swadeshi times, however, peasant passivity might be considered as a third objective limitation to the nationalism of the intelligentsia.

Thus the limits of the swadeshi movement in Bengal were set ultimately by the socio-economic structure and cultural traditions inherited by the men of 1905. "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852)—*Historical Writings* (1944), Volume I, p. 293.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1899	January	}	Viceroyalty of Curzon.
1905	November		
1899	September		Reduction of elected element in Calcutta Corporation.
1901			Rabindranath's Santiniketan 'asrama'.
1902	March		Foundation of Annshilan Samiti, Indian Stores.
	June		First Shivaji 'utsava' in Calcutta.
	July		Foundation of Dawn Society.
	October		Birastami festival (Sarala Debi).
1903	28 March		Fraser Note proposing transfer of Chittagong Division, Dacca, Mymensingh to Assam.
	19 May-1 June		Curzon's <i>Minute on Territorial Redistribution</i> .
	3 December		Publication of Risley Letter.
	17 December		Conference organised by Bengal Landholders' Association.
1903	December	}	First round of protest meetings.
1904	March		
1904	February		Curzon's E. Bengal tour.
	18 March		Town Hall meeting and memorial (Peary Mukherji).
	March		Universities Act.
	March		Jogendrachandra Ghosh's Association for Advancement of Scientific and Industrial Education.
	June		Burdwan Provincial Conference—"A subject nation has no politics" (Asutosh Chandhuri).
	July		Rabindranath's <i>Swadeshi samaj</i> address.
	November		Foundation of <i>Sandhya</i> .
1905	10 January		Town Hall meeting (Henry Cotton).

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| 2 February | Curzon's Partition Despatch to Secretary of State. |
| 11 February | Curzon's Convocation address. |
| 10 March | Town Hall protest against convocation address. |
| 8 May | Dwijendralal Roy's play <i>Rana Pratapsingha</i> . |
| 9 June | Secretary of State's consent to Partition. |
| 6 July | "Banger sarbanash"— <i>Sanjibani</i> . E. Bengal Petition to Secretary of State signed by 70,000. |
| 13 July | <i>Sanjibani</i> call for boycott. |
| 14-23 July | Boycott resolutions adopted at Kishoregunj, Bagerhat, Pabna. |
| 19 July | Formal announcement of partition decision. |
| 7 August | Town Hall meeting under Manindra Nandi adopts boycott resolution. |
| 3, 5, 15 August | Bepin Pal's meetings urging extension of boycott to education and titles. <i>Sandhya</i> denounces "Slavishness in Protest" (9 and 14 August). |
| 23 August | <i>Pratijna</i> call for "passive resistance". |
| 25 August | Rabindranath's <i>Abastha o byabastha</i> (Situation and Remedy) address. |
| 1 September | Partition Proclamation. |
| 2 September | Howrah Burn clerks' strike. |
| 7 September | Students' Union founded under Surendranath. |
| 22 September | Town Hall meeting (Lalmohan Ghosh). |
| 23 September | Hindu-Muslim rally at Rajabazar in north Calcutta. |
| 27 September | Government of India and Bengal Secretariat Press strike. |
| 28 September | Mahalaya swadeshi pledge at Kalighat temple. |
| September | <i>The Case Against the Break-up of Bengal, All About Partition, Raja ke?</i> and <i>Sonar bangla</i> illegal leaflets. |
| September | Three editions of <i>Bande Mataram</i> collection of swadeshi songs. |

	3 October	Harrison Road police-pickers clash.
	5-10 October	Calcutta tram conductors' strike.
	16 October	Partition Day—Rakhibandhan-arandhan, Federation Hall, strikes in Calcutta suburbs, closing of shops. <i>Bangalakshmi brata-katha</i> .
	21 October	Renewal of press strike, foundation of Printers' Union under A. K. Ghosh.
	21 October	Pedlar letter to college principals.
	22 October	Publication of Carlyle Circular threatening withdrawal of grants, scholarships, and recognition.
	24 October- 17 November	} Development of movement to boycott official education—numerous student rallies at College Square and Field and Academy Club.
	November	
		Repressive measures at Rangpur, Madaripur and Barisal; Lyons' Educational and Bande Mataram Circulars (8 November).
	4 November	Foundation of Anti-Circular Society.
	8 November	First National School at Rangpur.
	9 November	Subodh Mullick's gift of one lakh rupees.
	16 November	National Education Conference at Bengal Landholders' Association—examination boycott called off.
1905	November	} Viceroyalty of Minto.
1910	November	
1905	10 December	Second Conference of Landholders' Association sets up Ways and Means Committee.
	24 December	Formation of extremist 'Swadeshi Mandali'.
	25 December	Amritalal Bose's play <i>Sabash bangali</i> .
	December	Benaras Congress, First Industrial Conference.
1906	31 January	Town Hall meeting and petition to Morley.
	14 February	Grand Theatre meeting to honour swadeshi sufferers.
	16 February	Muslim reception to swadeshi sufferers at Albert Hall.

- 3 March 17 meetings in Calcutta as reply to Morley's settled fact speech.
- March Fort Gloster Jute Mill (Bauria) strike, aided by A. C. Banerji and Prabhatkumār Roy-chaudhuri.
- 11 March Foundation of National Council of Education
- 23, 28 March Letters criticising composition of National Council of Education published in *Bengalee*.
- April Foundation of *Yugantar* weekly.
- 14-15 April Barisal Provincial Conference—lathi-charge on volunteers, arrest of Surendranath, conference dispersed by police. Wave of protest meetings; resignations from honorary posts.
- April-May Iswargunj riots.
- April-May Bepin Pal, Subodh Mullick and Aurobindo's tour of Dacca, Mymensingh and Comilla.
- 4-6 June Shivaji 'utsava' with Bhawani-image, attended by Tilak, Khaparde and Munje.
- 6 June Printers' Union reception to Maharashtrian leaders.
- 10 June Moderate-extremist clash at meeting to set up Congress Reception Committee.
- 25 July Opening of Bengal Technical Institute.
- July-September EIR clerks' strike.
- 27 July Foundation of Railwaymen's Union at *Sandhya* office meeting.
- 1 August Opening of Banga Lakshmi Cotton Mills.
- 3 August Resignation of Fuller.
- 4 August Asansol branch of Railwaymen's Union set up by Apurbakumar Ghosh and Premtosh Bose.
- 7 August Boycott day procession and meeting with participation of Printers' Union and national flag prepared by Anti-Circular Society.
- 11 August First anniversary meeting of Barisal Swadesh Bandhab Samiti.
- 15 August Opening of Bengal National College and School.

	19 August	Foundation of Indian Mill-Hands' Union at Budge Budge under Aswinicoomar Banerji and Prabhatkusum Roychaudhuri.
	27 August	Firing on Jamalpur railway workshop strikers.
	August	Foundation of <i>Bande Mataram</i> daily.
	5 September	Asansol railway clerks' strike.
	4-6 September	Strike at Kharagpur railway workshop.
	18 September	Bepin Pal's article "That Sinful Desire" defining aims and methods of extremism.
	September	Foundation of Dacca Annushilan Samiti.
	1 October	Simla deputation.
	16 October	Meetings against and in support of partition.
	June-October	Famine relief work by Barisal Swadesh Bandhab Samiti.
1906	August	} Hemchandra Kanungo in Europe—contacts with Russian socialists in Paris.
1908	January	
1906	3 November	Foundation of proswadeshi Bengal Mahomedan Association.
	21 November	<i>Sandhya</i> exposition of passive resistance creed.
	December	Calcutta Congress and Industrial Conference. Foundation of Muslim League.
1907	January-March	Pal's tour of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Comilla, Barisal.
	February	Comilla district conference.
	3 March	<i>Yugantar</i> criticism of passive resistance.
	4-6 March	Comilla riots.
	March-April	Berhampur Provincial Conference.
	April-May	Pal's tour of Andhra and Madras.
	9-23 April	Anurobindo's articles in <i>Bande Mataram</i> —"Doctrine of Passive Resistance".
	April	District conferences in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh.
	April-May	Mymensingh riots—Jamalpur, Dewanganj, Bakshigunj, Phulpur.
	2-9 May	Disturbances in Punjab; deportation of Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh.

11 May	Regulation of Meetings Ordinance passed and applied to Punjab and parts of East Bengal.
14 May	Proposed sedition cases against Pal and six swadeshi Muslim orators.
25-26 May	Khulna district conference.
3 June	Warning to newspapers.
12 June	Arrest of Liakat Husain and Gafur in Barisal.
June	Jessore and Pabna district conferences.
22 June	<i>Bande Mataram</i> editorial attacking "Mr A. Chaudhuri's policy".
July	24-Parganas district conference; banning of Faridpur district conference.
3 July	Proposed deportation of Aswinikumar Dutta.
24 July	Conviction of Bhupendranath Dutta in <i>Yugantar</i> sedition case.
8 August	Loyalist manifesto of British Indian Association.
August	Rabindranath's <i>Byadhi o pratikar</i> .
26 August	<i>Yugantar's</i> polemic with <i>Sandhya</i> .
September	Hooghly district conference.
10 September	Contempt of court sentence on Pal in <i>Bande Mataram</i> sedition case.
14 September	<i>Nabasakti</i> call for political strikes on Russian model.
22 September	Sherpur police-Muslim clash.
23 September	Acquittal of Aurobindo in <i>Bande Mataram</i> case.
25 September	} Keir Hardie's tour of E. Bengal.
1 October	
2-4 October	Calcutta clashes.
27 October	Death of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay.
1 November	Seditious Meetings Act.
18-30 November	Strike of Eurasian drivers and guards of EIR.
6 December	Attempt to blow up Fraser's train near Narayanganj; Chingripota dacoity.

	7-8 December	Moderate-extremist clash at Midnapur district conference.
	23 December	Attack on Dacca district magistrate.
	26-27 December	Surat Congress and split.
	December 1907 February 1908	} Strike of Muslim drivers and firemen on Eastern Bengal State Railway.
1908	27 January	3 years' rigorous imprisonment for Liakat Husain.
	12 February	Rabindranath's Presidential Address at Pabna Provincial Conference.
	February	Birbhum district conference.
	February-March	Strikes and clashes at Tuticorin and Tinneveli.
	February	Comilla and Mynensingh district conferences.
	March	Faridpur district conference.
	March-April	Kidderpore Royal Indian Marine Dockyard strike.
	5 April	Fund-raising procession of dock strikers led by A. C. Banerji.
	11 April	Attack on Mayor Tardivel of Chandernagore.
	April	Calcutta telegraph signallers' strike.
	30 April	Assassination of Kennedies at Muzaffarpur.
	2 May	Round-up of Aurobindo-Barin group.
	2 June	Barrali dacoity—first major action of Dacca Anushilan.
	8 June	Explosive Substances and Indian Newspapers Acts.
	13 June	Kshudiram Bose sentenced to death.
	June	Rabindranath's <i>Path o patheya</i> .
	24-29 July	6-day political strike of Bombay workers against Tilak sentence.
	31 August	Assassination of Narendranath Gossain in side Alipur jail.
	7 November	Attack on Fraser.
	9 November	Assassination of subinspector Nandalal Banerji.

- 11 December Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act.
- 11 December Deportations of Krishnakumar Mitra, Sachindraprasad Basu, Manoranjan Guha, Aswinikumar Dutta, Satischandra Chatterji, Shyamsundar Chakrabarti, Subodhchandra Mullick, Bhupeshchandra Nag, Pulinbehari Das.
- 27 December D. L. Roy's *Mewar-patan*.
- 1909 5 January Banning of Barisal Swadesh Bandhab Samiti, Dacca Anushilan, Faridpur Brati Samiti, Mymensingh Suhrid Samiti and Sadhana Samaj.
- 1907-1909 Rabindranath's *Gora*.

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Now with Jadavpur University. I am grateful to Sri P. C. V. Mallik

for granting me permission to consult this diary, excerpts from which the university intends to publish in the near future.

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